



ASLEF

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JOURNAL
JANUARY 2012

It's not all blue at Parliament!

**District Council meets
in Westminster -
and new GS meets new
transport minister**

8 Union complains to BBC
about Top Gear man

22 London Midland dispute
revisited at university

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standing up for the members!

I SAID in this column last month that I had just 'taken over the general secretary's chair'. Well, ever since then, I've hardly sat in it!

I've had a meeting at the Department for Transport with the new minister, Justine Greening and, keeping up the Westminster theme, spoken to graduates at the city's university. I've been involved in dispute resolution talks with Scotrail and I've met Stock Exchange occupiers and various managers. I've also been to Edinburgh, Lincoln and Wortley Hall in Yorkshire for various ASLEF functions.

I was even on parade last Sunday morning for a discussion programme on London's LBC radio and I've done a number of TV and local radio interviews. And I've been contacted by a host of people who suddenly feel much warmer towards me since I became general secretary! Is this a coincidence, I wonder?

But I don't mind living a hectic life. Time goes much quicker and you go home feeling more fulfilled. I much prefer it to clock-watching. Besides, I also want our union to be seen as less London-oriented, and I look forward to going to all the District Councils and branches that have invited me.

I was pleased to see one of our district councils last month considering the union's political activities. I know this is often portrayed as 'giving money to the Labour party': but it isn't. It covers a range of campaigning work, and as long as politicians make decisions about the railways, we need to be in a position to influence and educate them.

As that is going to be 'forever' I urge you to keep paying your political levy. It costs very little – 2.5% of our subs – and it's vital to our work.

Now I'll get off my soap-box and see if I can find a minute to sit in the general secretary's chair – but first let me offer a word of thanks to everyone who works on behalf of ASLEF for their work and dedication over the past 12 months and to wish you all a peaceful and successful 2012.

Mick Whelan

General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**

ASLEF member loses legs in shunt tragedy

AN ASLEF member who lost both his legs after they were run over by a train has received £750,000 in compensation. EWS admitted 65% responsibility for the accident and settled the claim out of court.

Our colleague was on the ground helping a driver shunt a train as part of his job for EWS at Harlow Hill train yard. His legs came in contact with the train and were severed below the

knee. He has been medically retired since the traumatic accident in August 2007.

Through extensive physiotherapy he has learnt to walk with prosthetic limbs and it is a tribute to his determination and resolve that he has been able to start riding horses and a specially adapted motorbike.

He said, 'I knew as soon as it happened that I had lost my legs. I was significantly traumatised by what had happened in part

because my life revolved around riding horses and motorbikes.

'This compensation means I can move to a property more suitable to my current and future needs.

'In the early days I had assumed I would one day be fit enough to return to work but it's now apparent that I can't.'

Mick Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary, said, 'This terrible tragedy serves as a reminder to just how dangerous working on the railways can be. Our member should have been provided with appropriate training which may have prevented this from happening.

'I can only offer all our deepest sympathy for what happened, and our admiration for the strength he has shown since this awful incident.'



FINES FOR PASSENGERS IN THE DARK

Train companies who fail to keep passengers updated when rail services are disrupted or delayed could face heavy fines. The Office for Rail Regulation (ORR) says it will act against operators failing to provide appropriate, accurate and timely updates to passengers.

A new code of conduct says staff must be given messages to pass on to the public within ten minutes of an incident being notified to a control office, and then updated every 20 minutes.

FREIGHT ON HS1

Eurotunnel announced last month that its Europorte Channel subsidiary had been granted approval to operate its fleet of Class 92 locomotives on High Speed 1. Driver training is now in progress with the expectation that commercial freight services will be launched early in 2012.

Using HS1 offers the potential to cut the transit time for freight between London and the Channel Tunnel to 70 minutes, compared with four hours on conventional routes.

HULL RAIL GRAFFITI VANDAL JAILED

Joseph Binney, 22, has been sent to jail for two years for causing over £20,000 worth of damage to the railways by daubing graffiti onto trains. He travelled the country to slap paint onto trains as far apart as Hull – his home town – London and Birkenhead.

Network Rail charged over Elsenham

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has begun criminal proceedings against Network Rail for breaches of health and safety law which led to the deaths of two teenage girls at Elsenham, Essex, station footpath crossing on 3 December 2005. NR stands accused of failing to carry out proper assessments of the risks to the safety of

members of the public using the footpath crossing or to have in place adequate arrangements to underpin these assessments.

Olivia Bazlinton and Charlotte Thompson, aged 14 and 13, were struck by a Stansted train when they opened the wicket gates and walked on to the crossing.



SOLID ASLEF ACTION IN DB SCHENKER

Around 40 ASLEF members took two day's industrial action over pay in the freight company DB Schenker last month. 'The solid support for the action is a clear indication of the strength of our members' feelings on the issue,' said the union's general secretary Mick Whelan.

Negotiations have resumed in an attempt to resolve the dispute.

Union seeks London prayer/faith room

The union's black and ethnic members' representative for District One, Ed D'Bell, wants to hear from any driver within the London area who practices their faith or pray whilst at work.

'I would like them to contact me directly – via my email which is edgardbell@gmail.com – about the possibility of allocating an area or a room to do this in certain depots,'

Ed says.

He aims to collect responses which he can present to employers to strengthen the argument for the provision of a prayer room.

13 TICKETS TO RYE!

ONE of ASLEF's head office staff recently booked a journey for two people with Southern from London to Rye in Sussex. When he collected the tickets at an automatic machine at Victoria it was 'like standing in front of a fruit machine when you've just won' – the tickets just kept coming! Altogether, he was issued with 13 tickets. 'I thought rail was environmentally friendly – but this journey must have cost a forest!' he said.



13 tickets to Rye

New GS meets new transport secretary

General Secretary Mick Whelan met new Secretary of State for Transport Justine Greening at the start of December. During the hour-long meeting in the minister's office he raised the union's concerns about the fragmentation implications of the McNulty Report, drivers' pensions and travel facilities and the Bombardier issue.

Mick outlined the union's main concerns about the Department

for Transport's forthcoming response to the McNulty report. He urged the new minister to look with fresh eyes at an agenda dominated by fragmentation and privatisation. While the chances of Ms Greening actually doing this are slim, she did agree to re-examine risk sharing between the government and the train operating companies.

Mick also highlighted the union's concerns about the government's 'Red Tape

Challenge' consultation which seeks to decrease regulation on business. There had been suggestions in the media that both the railway pension scheme and staff travel facilities were to be scrutinised. The minister gave Mick a categorical assurance that there would be no changes in either of these areas.

Greening was adamant that there would be no reversal of the decision to award the Thameslink contract to Siemens.



KEN WILL CUT LONDONERS FARES

Ken Livingstone says that if he is elected as Mayor of London next May he will introduce an 'emergency fares package'. He pledges a package that will begin with an immediate overall fares cut and involve an overall cut in fares for Londoners of 5% in the autumn of 2012 and no further fare rises at all in 2013.

Ken says he will fund the price cuts from some of the increasing operating surplus from TfL, which declared an operating surplus for the last financial year of £728million. He points out that Boris Johnson has raised fares by 21.1% between 2009 and 2011 while inflation was just 8%. The price of a bus ride using an Oyster card has gone up by 56% since 2008.

Ken said, 'I'm drawing a line in the sand. Boris Johnson will hit you with a painful fare increase this coming January, but if I am elected the fares will be cut. There could be no clearer choice.'

AUTOMATIC TRAINS GO UNDERGROUND IN PARIS



Drivers on the Paris metro have seen the first automatic trains going into service on the busy Line One which runs from La Défense to the Château de Vincennes. The trains are guided remotely from a control room and protective platform-edge barriers.

Paris already has driverless trains on line 14, the world's first fully automatic underground line. But that was built from scratch. Never before has an old line been reequipped with reconfigured platforms and new electronics.

ASLEF's general secretary Mick Whelan says the amount of investment needed to provide an utterly safe system in the UK capital would be 'breathtaking'. 'London Underground is struggling to bring our city's underground system into the 20th century,' he says. 'We are a long way from the fool-proof safe systems that would be needed to follow even the limited French example.'

FARE INCREASES GOOD FOR TOCS

Government spending watchdog the National Audit Office said last month that train operating companies could gain more than taxpayers out of this month's rail fares increases. The NAO said some of the budget reductions in rail and road maintenance may not be financially sustainable.

In a sample of 73% of the Department for Transport's (DfT) budget, more than half the reductions were 'the result of cuts, delays to new investment or higher fares, rather than new approaches to delivering the same service for less'.

'I really would like to say I'm surprised,' says ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan. 'But I'm not. Ever since rail was privatised the train operating companies have either made vast profits or tossed their franchises back to the public sector. Their attitude towards passengers and taxpayers is modelled more on Dick Turpin than public service.'

Thameslink mistake 'repeated at Crossrail'

Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary Maria Eagle said she was astonished at last month's news that the government has decided to repeat the procurement model used for Thameslink when ordering new Crossrail trains.

She accused Justine Greening of 'having no more interest in backing British train manufacturing jobs than her predecessor'.

'Having refused even to



review the decision to build the new Thameslink trains in Germany, she now looks set to stick with the same failed funding model for the new Crossrail trains. Yet again the odds are to be stacked against Bombardier.'

Maria called on the government to agree to Labour's call for full responsibility for procuring the new Crossrail trains to be handed to Transport for London, which has a track record of buying British.

NO MILITARY ACTION IN IRAN SAYS HOPI Hands Off the People of Iran, to which the union is affiliated, has 'unequivocally condemned' the increased sanctions imposed on that country. The excuse used for the increased sanctions was a report in November from the International Atomic Energy Agency on Iran's nuclear capability.

New style training involves non-technical skills

THE Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) has begun a project with the industry to develop and pilot a new kind of training course for train drivers. The aim is to 'complement technical training and improve safety by developing drivers' non-technical skills'.

By 'non-technical' they mean skills like decision making, managing your workload and situational awareness. RSSB research has found that this type of skill enhances technical performance and improves safety by helping to anticipate, identify and reduce errors. Training

courses like this are already taking place in the USA and Australia.

They began by identifying the non-technical skills most useful to drivers and came up with this list of key areas:

NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS

1. Situational awareness
2. Workload management
3. Decision making and action
4. Conscientiousness
5. Communication
6. Cooperation and working with others
7. Self-management

With this in mind, two courses have been developed, one for

drivers and one for managers.

PILOT COMPLETED

From February to April last year a pilot course was run in Northern Rail and Arriva Trains Wales. Drivers said that although the skills being taught are nothing new, the course draws attention to them and is a chance to discuss experiences with colleagues and develop NTS skills.

The next step is to produce a guidance report and training materials for the industry. This should be available in the Spring. It will detail how to implement

the training and point out to companies how to reinforce the skills learned.

The union has been involved from the start, with ASLEF's national safety advisor Dave Bennett being a member of the project steering group and presentations made to the union as it has progressed. The EC have supported it throughout.

● To find out more about the development, you can visit the RSSB's Non-Technical Skills webpage which is <http://www.rssb.co.uk/EXPERTISE/HF/Pages/NON-TECHNICALSKILLS.aspx>

Why Europe's timetables changed last month



European timetables for Continental trains change on the second Sunday in December. This seems an odd date to choose – but now all is revealed.

It is to coincide with the French ski services which begin a fortnight before Christmas! As a result of insistence by the French railways, a European consensus to change train times on New Year's Day has been shelved.

ASLEF Underground action on Boxing Day

The union's members working in London Underground voted overwhelmingly to take action on Boxing Day. The dispute concerns the union's insistence that the day must be covered by volunteers.

The union balloted its 2,200 Underground drivers and they returned a 92.3% vote in favour of action.

The whole dispute has been about seeking equitable quality time off for our members but recognising those who do operate the service may need to be incentivised.

The company is currently offering no additional payments for working on Boxing Day. The union says its members may need 'substantial incentives' to volunteer.

If the dispute is not resolved, the union intends to take further action on 16 January and 3 and 13 February.

North East wins bad weather competition!

We like to keep an eye out for the first 'bad weather rail disruption chaos' story in the media – and this year's prize seems to have gone to the north-east!

Mid way through December it was reported that 'battering winds' had hit the North East causing transport disruption and cancelling events.

Rail operators cut



the speed limit of trains operating north of Morpeth in Northumberland as gales hit 90 mph. Network Rail reduced

the speed on the route to and from Scotland from the standard 125 mph first to 80 mph and then to 50.

It might have been the first of these stories – but you can bet your bottom dollar it won't be the last!

Rest Day agreement with Scotrail

At the conclusion of talks in London between First Scotrail and ASLEF, it was announced that an agreement has been reached on rest day working. The company agreed to recruit at least 32 drivers next year and to work with the union to eliminate rest day working by 1 April 2013. As a result the union agreed to sanction rest day working.

The talks involved ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan, the union's Scottish officer Kevin Lindsay and representatives of Scotrail. Mick said he was pleased with the outcome. 'It's a good agreement for our members,' he said. 'We welcome Scotrail's commitment to remove institutionalised overtime from Scotland's railways.'

SCOTTISH BUSINESS BACKS HI-SPEED

A poll carried out last month by the Scottish Partnership Group for High Speed Rail, which was formed by Transport Minister Keith Brown, has insisted that extending the HS line to Scotland makes the case for the proposed network stronger. It claims that bringing a high-speed line north of the border could bring benefits of £25bn to Scotland.



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Recovering from suicide trauma

Gerry Jackson, a Psychosocial Care and Trauma specialist, has worked with survivors of many disasters for over two decades. Last year when he helped train ASLEF reps in Cross Country we asked him how best to help drivers affected by suicides ...

EVERY railway suicide is a tragedy – but the drivers of the trains are often the forgotten victims. Drivers' reactions, if not managed well, can develop into serious illnesses and end a footplate career.

On average every train driver can expect to have a suicide under their train during their career. It is natural for people involved in traumatic incidents to suffer some reaction - and train drivers are no exception.

Reactions can include sleep difficulties, unpleasant mental pictures, constant feelings of anxiety, poor concentration, feelings of loneliness, difficulties in relationships, constantly thinking about the incident and diverse other forms.

The good news is that most people recover from these reactions, especially if they receive positive support from family, colleagues and managers. The bad news is that not everyone does - and we need to make sure we identify those people - and get them to a professional counsellor.

British Rail's 'Chain of Care and Support' safety directive from the mid-90s needs updating to bring it into line with modern research and government guidelines.

What follows is what I believe should be the basis for looking after drivers' welfare.

GETTING THE SUPPORT THAT'S NEEDED

Most train companies provide an employee counselling service - but this is not the whole answer. Most people do not need professional counselling, but they do benefit from the support and care of those around them. This may be provided by 'Peer Supporters' - trained people from within the company.

ON THE DAY

A driver must be met quickly after a fatality or other incident, and only continue driving if they wish to do so. Practical assistance, like transport home, should be provided, along with contact numbers where support is available if they feel troubled in the coming days.

A FEW DAYS LATER

Drivers finding the situation very difficult should be seen by a Peer Supporter after a few days. This is to check how they feel, find out about their personal practical needs and arrange for them to be

provided wherever possible. The Peer Supporter will ask about reactions, probably explain that they are common following fatalities and give advice about coping.

If they want to tell the story of what happened it is important to have an attentive and empathetic listener.

Professional counselling would only be appropriate at this time for drivers experiencing extremely strong symptoms – but the Peer Supporter should continue to be available.

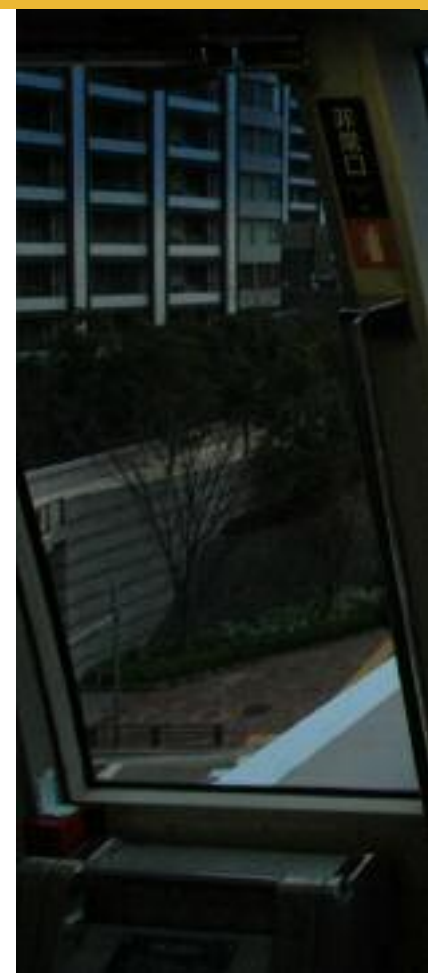
IN THE WEEKS TO COME

This support may continue for a few weeks, if necessary, to make sure recovery progresses and to continue to offer advice and practical help. If the driver and Peer Supporter feel recovery is not progressing well, professional counselling is recommended. This may be quite informal, just the occasional chat, or involve an arranged meeting.

RECOVERY

Given good support from managers and colleagues, most people recover in about four weeks, frequently only needing a few days off work to 'get their breath back'. Chatting to others in the mess room can be helpful but there should always be someone available who has been trained to give helpful support and who can assess if it is advisable to see a professional counsellor.

But there are no hard and fast rules. Some take longer to recover and need a more structured support process. If a driver's reactions make it difficult to get into work or do the job safely,



obviously he or she should stay off. A peer supporter and/or manager and/or colleagues should continue to support the person and, if necessary, they should be referred for professional counselling.

It is not helpful for a driver to stay at home even if the reactions continue. It removes them from support by colleagues and managers, leaves them dwelling on the incident and may cause problems that were not previously there.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

All train companies should have a formalised policy and procedures covering employee welfare after traumatic incidents. Peer supporters should be selected from amongst drivers, managers and other employees, then properly trained and supervised by an expert. Managers meeting drivers who have had a fatality should be fully understand their role and responsibilities. Finally, I believe Peer Supporter training would add considerably to the skills of ASLEF representatives.

More information about Gerry and his work can be found at www.gerryjackson.co.uk





Callous Clarkson says don't stop for suicides

THOUSANDS of members of the public, and specifically rail workers and ASLEF members, were astonished and enraged at the BBC for allowing Jeremy Clarkson time to air his view that trains should carry on without delaying him when there was a fatality on the line. On the BBC's One Show, Clarkson said, 'I do sometimes use the train to come to London but it always stops in Reading. It's always because somebody has jumped in front of it and somebody has burst.' He didn't see that it was worth stopping for a suicide, and later branded people who threw themselves under trains as 'selfish'.

ASLEF's general secretary Mick Whelan condemned the remarks as 'the face of ignorance and bigotry' and made a formal complaint to the BBC.

'This ignorant man has no respect for human tragedy or dignity,' Mick said. 'To him, a bloodied corpse on the line is nothing more than an annoying

delay in his journey.'

Mick says this shows a terrible disregard for the families of the bereaved and the trauma caused to ASLEF's train driver members. 'This is not 'winding people up'. It is a reflection of a callous man.'

In his letter of complaint, Mick said, 'I fail to see why the Corporation should wish to give air time to opinions lacking any respect for human tragedy or dignity.'

🟡 Catherine Johnstone, the Samaritans' Chief Executive said Jeremy Clarkson's comments 'beggared belief'. 'His notion that suicide is a selfish act shows how little he knows about the subject because, if he did, he would know that when a person attempts suicide they are so distressed that they genuinely believe their families will be better off without them. The concept that their actions could be construed as selfish is the furthest thing from their mind.'



Mick Whelan sent a formal letter of complaint to the BBC. We will publish the response when it arrives at head office

DRIVER OMARA AIRS HIS VIEW ...



When Driver Hugh Omara heard Mick Whelan speaking about Clarkson's remarks on Radio Sheffield, he

thought, 'This is my chance to put the drivers' side'. So he got on the phone he was on air shortly after Mick.

Hugh, who works for Freightliner Heavy Haul, says he could hardly believe that Clarkson had been so callous in talking about a body 'bursting'. 'Clarkson said later he was being humorous. Humorous! He should go through something like that himself and see how funny it really is. He had no thought for rail workers who literally have to pick up the pieces.'

'When I was involved in a fatality it was only weeks after I had returned to work after having a heart attack. After it I was off for another three months.'

'We take on this job because we want to drive trains. Not be involved in fatalities.'

'Clarkson is a motoring correspondent. That's what he should stick to,' he told listeners to BBC Radio Sheffield.

... AND KARL GOES TO THE GUARDIAN

Karl Davis, one of our highly articulate members from Peterborough, took to the Comment section of the Guardian to make his complaints. He began by explaining that when he had a fatality on the line 'my family life, perceptions and professional confidence were deeply shaken' and went on to detail the traumatic effects it had on him.

Karl went on to say that Clarkson's fixation on 'disruption' caused by suicides, and his wish for bodies to be 'left for scavenging animals' reflects the worst of the most unfeeling commuter's sensibilities.

He concluded, 'If people of his ilk could only apply themselves to helping society understand, empathise and deal with mental illness instead of using it as a vehicle to sell DVDs and books, maybe more people would know where to look for the help that may keep them from jumping in front of my train.'

WHAT IS ASLEF DOING?

A link up between the union, Network Rail and the Samaritans has led to a new course for union reps being developed on how best to handle members who have suffered a trauma like a fatality on the line. A successful pilot course was run at Derby and a full course provided in East Midland Trains. It is hoped that we can eventually roll it out to reps at every level across the country. In addition, a booklet is in preparation which should be available to drivers early in the New Year. The aim is to provide reps with the necessary tools to assess what help is needed, and to be aware of where to find it. The union has approached all companies with a view to negotiating time off for the training. First Capital Connect, Merseyrail, Southern and DRS support the initiative, East Coast and First Great Western have agreed to a trial and the union is in discussion with the other FOCs and TOCs.

Planning ahead – rail choices for the future

We complain regularly – and justifiably – that the franchise system leads to a railway that operates on short-term basis, which is utterly unsuitable for planning a rail network. Recently the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), along with Network Rail, the operating companies and suppliers, began the process of drawing up options and choices to put to the government next year for planning the network in Control Period 5, covering the period 2014 – 2019. ASLEF was pleased to be able to respond to the Initial Industry Plan (IIP). Here are some of the main points we made ...

FIGURES quoted by Credo Group for Invensys Rail show that every £1 invested in rail by the Government generates an additional £1.30 from the private sector – in other words investment in transport has a stronger multiplier effect than other sectors of the economy.

ASLEF firmly believes that we must continue to invest in rail infrastructure to continue the successful growth in both rail freight and passenger operations.

- In the past ten years rail freight has grown by 60% and it now has 11.5% of the UK surface freight market - as opposed to 8% in 1994.
- Passenger numbers are currently higher than at any time in history in peace time Britain.

This is positive news for road congestions, the environment and the economy. However it also makes it essential that infrastructure is able to keep pace with demand. For while passenger numbers are at an all-time high, so is overcrowding. A report from the ORR in August showed that trains serving the South Eastern commuter belt were carrying 3% over capacity, with Leeds and Birmingham also suffering badly.

FREIGHT EXPANSION A PRIORITY

ASLEF supports several schemes to enhance freight capacity and efficiency, including work north of Preston on the West Coast Main Line which will increase capacity to 36 trains a day in each direction by 2019, and 48 trains a day by

2030.

We also want the ORR to consider Great Western Main Line Gauge Enhancements and additional upgrade work between Felixstowe to Nuneaton.

Work on signalling and line speed on the Southampton – West Coast Main Line would also help capacity meet the 2030 forecasts while use of the routes via Andover, Kew, Melksham and Oxford to Bletchingley would provide additional capability. Diversionary capability could also be examined.

Rail transport has many indirect financial benefits for the taxpayer. For example, road congestion costs businesses £17 billion per annum, with HGVs paying considerably less than they cost.

SPARKING THE ECONOMY

We support the case made in the IIR that network electrification must be a core component of the industry's strategy to address climate change. Electrification reduces rolling stock operating costs (including fuel), capital costs of new vehicles and infrastructure operating costs, while it increases rolling stock availability rates and vehicle life.

Electric traction also provides passengers with quieter, smoother and usually quicker trains, and makes life quieter for people who live near the track. Research has also identified a 'sparks effect' showing that electrification attracts passengers to rail as they assume a better quality line.

That is one reason we oppose plans to stop the electrification of



Train of Tomorrow, Barclay Shaw, 1980

the Great Western Mainline at Cardiff. This will have a negative effect on Swansea's economy and is especially galling when Great Western, who run the franchise, believes that there is a business case.

The electrification of the Midland Mainline must be a priority as it will create jobs, increase capacity, lower on-going running costs and reduce carbon emissions.

FINISH FRANCHISING, AN £11 BILLION DISASTER

Despite much we have in common, ASLEF totally opposes the management assertion that franchising is 'a highly competitive process which has attracted the involvement of companies with strong track records in cost efficiency'.

Since privatisation, more than £11 billion of public funds has been misspent - on debt write-offs, dividend payments, fragmentation costs including profit margins of complex tiers of contractors and sub-contractors, and higher interest payments designed to keep Network Rail's debts off the government balance sheet.

These are only the readily-quantified costs of rail privatisation. Others are much

more difficult to quantify - like

- excess interest payment on rolling stock company (ROSCO) debt
- poor cost control
- excessive bonus payments and high salaries for senior managers
- costs of bidding for franchises, awarding them, and re-branding when a new company takes over
- bail-outs of failing operators
- unplanned costs arising from over-complexity; and
- unpaid tax.

We're also concerned at mentions in the IIP about 'labour productivity'. In our driving grades, productivity has dramatically improved over the past two decades. Diagrams from Southern region depots from 1991/92 show that drivers spent 45% of their hours driving and 23% was slack time. In 2010/11 driving time was 66% with 14% as slack time.

Our union sees spending on rail as a way of kick starting the economy and creating growth rather than an area ripe for cutting. Infrastructure investment is essential in increasing transport capacity, reducing carbon emissions and creating jobs. It must be made a priority.

Union supports action for living pensions

ASLEF members all over the country offered support to public servants who came out strike on 30 November to defend their agreed pension arrangements.

'Our union was not on strike as we are not directly involved in the dispute,' says general secretary Mick Whelan. 'But although rail workers are no longer public service employees, we work within one of the most important public services.'

Mick said, 'Britain's public servants came out in force in the face of their employers demanding that they pay more for worse pensions. Their fight is morally just, and we know our employers are watching the outcome as carefully as we are – but with far less benevolent motives.'

The day before the strike, a BBC poll today revealed that 61% of people believed that public sector workers were justified in going on strike over pension changes. 'It was a heartening result,' Mick says. 'It is a shame that Labour's leadership did not recognise that public feeling and offer positive support for the action.'



Demonstrators filled the streets in Doncaster



Marchers in London were greeted with warmth from shoppers and passers-by: it was that odd thing, a popular strike!

STATE PENSIONS ARE POVERTY PENSIONS

At election time all politicians promise to protect the incomes of older people. But they haven't done it.

- Thirty years ago the UK state pension was worth 25% of average male earnings.
- Today it is worth 15% of average male earnings.

UK pensioner poverty is one of the worst in Europe – only Cyprus, Latvia and Estonia support their senior citizens less. France spends more than twice as much on pensions as the UK.

Our basic state pension is currently £102 a week – when the government itself sets the official weekly threshold level for pensioner poverty at £178. Two and a half million pensioners in the UK live below that level.

Even before the huge energy price rises this year, 3.5 million pensioners already lived in 'fuel poverty'.

All this means that working people in both the public and private sectors, need adequate occupational pensions to avoid poverty in old



Vice President Tosh McDonald told protestors that attacks on the private sector would 'sure as day' follow those in public services

age. 'The average pension for a retired private sector worker in an occupational scheme with a defined benefits is only £5,860,' Mick Whelan says. 'This is poverty. It is the opposite of everything the welfare state stands for.'

NOT FAIR ON TAXPAYERS

The PCS also lay to rest government claims that taxpayers spend an unfair amount on public sector pensions. It's not true. In fact, means-tested benefits for poor pensioners – those who aren't in occupational schemes – cost the country £13 billion.

The real scandal is that many big private companies have slashed their pension payments even though their profits stay high. Only 11% of private sector workers are still covered by the best type of schemes, and less than one-third are in any scheme at all.

Corporate bosses have washed their hands of their responsibilities to the workers who generate their profits – while at the same time the average pension for directors of large companies has soared to £175,000 a year.



Simon Weller (National Organiser, left) and Mick Whelan (General Secretary) led ASLEF support at the London demonstration

WHY PUBLIC SERVANTS TOOK ACTION ON 30 NOVEMBER

Public servants – from teachers and nurses to immigration officials and midwives – will be made to pay increase contributions over a longer working life – for lower pensions. How can they accept this without resistance?

The government wants

- to raise £2.8 billion through increased pension contributions to pay for the deficit – largely the result of irresponsibility by private sector bankers!
- to cut the long-term cost of public sector pensions further and deeper than a formal agreement reached in 2006
- to reduce pensions by measuring increases by CPI rather than RPI (something rail companies have been looking at)
- to create pension schemes with lower values to make it easier to privatise public sector jobs.

The PCS union says that the effect of these measures, if they get away with it, would cost pension scheme members an average of £63 per month.

And the union argues that the country can afford existing pensions schemes. Last year the National Audit Office said an agreement made over pensions in 2007 'reduces costs to taxpayers by 14%'. The Hutton Review said the cost of public sector pensions would fall 0.5% as a share of national wealth by 2060, and conceded that the average public sector pension is £5,600 a year – less than half the minimum wage. Finally, in May this year, Parliament's Public Accounts Committee could offer no proof that pensions were not sustainable.

DISTRICT COUNCILS BROADEN UNION

There has been some debate within the union over the last few years about the District Councils that bring together representatives from old British Rail regions. They also broadly outline the areas for which each of our eight District Organisers are responsible. Last month we went along to two District Council meetings to see what they got up to, and saw how with imagination they can be used to broaden the union's involvement, profile and influence as we strive to secure a modern and expanding transport system ...

THE Peel Committee Room in the Palace of Westminster was the impressive location for the December meeting of the District One Council – but Organiser Graham Morris insists it was not just a gimmick. 'We have to spend time working out our long-term objectives and strategies if we are to stand any chance of achieving them,' he says. 'We tend to be so busy in our industrial committees that we only have time for pressing issues.'

'We need to look decades ahead when we think about planning our railways. We need a long term vision of the union and the industry.'

It was echoed by Council chairman Perry Calvert. 'We are first and foremost an industrial union, but we are faced with political challenges and need to be involved. That is why we met in Parliament today. We need political influence to affect the McNulty plans for rail because politicians will make the decisions about whether and how to implement them.'

And the district executive committee members Marz Colombini said the way to stop criticism of these meetings was to make them useful. 'Improve them, don't moan about them!' he said.

GUEST APPEARANCES

With the committee officers, the union's political officer James McGowan had arranged a star cast of guest speakers covering subjects from London elections to European involvement and ranging from the shadow cabinet to Colombia. 'Today is all about thinking beyond the bread-and-butter issues,' Graham said. 'It's about examining alternatives.'

JOHN MONKS, now ennobled, who was the leader of the TUC and its European equivalent, warned about cutting ourselves off from 'our closest neighbours and most important trading partners' on the Continent.

'The last century was marked by divisions in Europe that led to two world wars,' he pointed out. 'Cooperation is self-evidently a better option.'

He said those looking with glee at the crisis in



Shadow transport minister Maria Eagle wants detailed ammunition to fire at the government. Former TUC leader John Monks is opposed to European isolation

the euro were simply wrong. 'If the euro collapses, the UK economy will be caught by backwash. Nobody gains. Being isolated is not a view for the future.'

John much preferred the differences between European countries to the globalism of the US, and stressed the gains that had come to working people from social legislation from the EU, such as a minimum four week holiday break and rights for agency workers. 'When things go right, domestic parties claim them – when they go wrong, it's all Europe's fault!' he said.

'We need to think about these issues carefully, because if we don't think what we want, we won't ever get it.'

'You are asking yourselves big questions today and I congratulate you on it.'

BYRON TAYLOR, who runs TULO, the liaison group between the unions and the Labour Party, described the 'frostiness' of the relations during the Brown and Blair years, based on the belief that unions are unpopular.

Byron wants unions to get involved in the Labour party to bring in politicians with a union background. 'We don't want people keen on political careers,' he insisted. 'We want union representatives who understand and are part of their class and their communities.'

He urged ASLEF to work locally with other



Representatives met in the plush surrounds of the

unions to draw up 'models for winning'.

MARIELA KOHON from Justice for Colombia returned to international themes and struck a sombre note. 'If this meeting was taking place in Colombia – the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist – you and your families would be at risk for being here,' she said.

She called for the union at every level to demand the end of UK military aid to Colombia, to support the peace process, to lobby MPs to support the Early Day Motion 2276 and for branches to affiliate to the JFC campaign and perhaps adopt a Colombian prisoner.

Shadow secretary of state for transport **MARIA EAGLE** spoke about the dangers of the McNulty Report becoming the basis for the government's plans for rail.

Her particular concern was more fragmentation of the industry. It could lead to charges for access to stations in the future, she declared, never mind to the track. 'We are on the side of passengers, not consultants, investors and lawyers.'

She called on the union to give her details of faults and waste in the system on both passenger and freight. 'We don't have access to specialist support now we are in Opposition,' she said. 'So we are relying on you to provide us with this detail.'

London Assembly member **VALERIE SHAWCROSS** wants to be deputy to a freshly elected Ken Livingstone next May and not unexpectedly she stressed Ken's commitment to public transport in the capital.

Driverless trains, she said, were a no-go for Ken and herself. 'Conservative Boris doesn't seem to understand that we are not moving 'things' about, but people. And that means we must take the maximum care.'

She appealed to anyone with any free time to visit www.yourken.org and see what you can do to ensure his election on 4 May.

JOHN CRYER, ASLEF's political officer for a

HORIZONS



e Palace of Westminster



Mick Whelan getting the anti-capitalists' message direct, rather than from the Daily Mail



Members of the District Six Council exchanged ideas with the tent-dwellers of St Paul's

SIX GO TO THE CITY

The day after District One's Parliament meeting, the District Six Council took in the opposite end of the political spectrum when its members went to visit the anti-capitalist protestors who have been living in tents outside St Paul's Cathedral in the rich City area of the capital.

'We knew that trade union representatives had gone to visit the 'Occupy Wall Street' protestors in New York's Zuccotti Park and wanted to hear what the London campaigners were about,' said District Secretary Dicky Fisher. 'We were meeting not far away and thought we'd like to hear their message directly, rather than through the media. So we went down there after our meeting.'

They were joined by their former District Organiser, now general secretary Mick Whelan. He said he was impressed by the resolve and social concern of the mainly young people in the camp. 'They may not have solutions to unfairness and inequality in our society, but they are articulating their opposition to a society based on the ethics of 'dog-eat-dog'. 'Personally, I'm delighted to see them doing something, rather than sulking at home, taking drugs or giving up. Good on them!'

There are currently three 'occupation camps' in London and 30 across the country, all protesting at 'corporate greed' and say they are 'working out solutions with anyone who wants to join in for a future free from austerity, growing inequality, unemployment, tax injustice and a political elite who ignores its citizens'.

'The occupations are a platform for everyone with alternative ideas about how we can live,' local spokespeople told Mick. 'Many young people think they have no say. Here, they do. And while 1% might be earning mega-money, we are the 99%.'

The statement they adopted when they took over St Paul's forecourt, next to the London Stock Exchange is, they say, 'a work in progress for further discussion and debate', but it includes refusal to pay for the banks' crisis, opposition to cuts and a call for the world's resources to 'go towards caring for people and the planet, not the military, corporate profits or the rich'.

If you're passing, go and talk to them. They are not as scary as the Daily Mail would have you believe.

short time and now MP for Leyton & Wanstead, gave a splendid account of the life of the principled backbench rebel we would all like to be.

He stressed that unions needed an active political agenda to meet their aims. 'Without a political fund and political activity, trade union laws will remain as restrictive as they are today. 'It is shameful that the recent Labour governments did nothing to end the legal ban on sympathy strikes. In other countries this would be seen as a breach of human rights.

ASLEF's political officer **JAMES MCGOWAN** concluded the session saying that we are 'stepping slowly into a new chapter of the union's history'. We have ASLEF members on the Scottish Labour Party executive and the TUC.

'This type of forum will make sure ASLEF continues to provide fresh ideas that will benefit not only our own members but people across the country and even in the international sphere.'

Colin Robins' writing steams ahead!

'I could write a book about my life on the railway! The stories I could tell ...!' How many times have you heard a driver coming up to retirement repeat these very words? Well, what makes Colin Robins different is - that he's done it! Chris Proctor headed off to Fareham to meet him ...

COLIN ROBINS is a bright, lively and hospitable man with amounts of energy that would be the envy of many a person aged half his 76 years. He meets me at Fareham station, scurries up the platform for a photograph and speeds me off to meet Joy, his wife of almost 60 years, in their neat and spotless home no more than a few minutes away.

'I couldn't live too far away from a railway track,' he tells me with a smile. 'I never have. I remember coming home after a late shift having a scrub when I heard the whistle of the last steam train to run along this track. Even though we'd seen it coming for years, it was a sad day ...'

Colin's book 'You Can't Take The Steam Out Of Me' is an account of the life of a footplateman in the days of steam. But it is no dry account. A man with Colin's eye for detail and sharp sense of the absurd couldn't be tedious. But how did he set about the task of writing some 70,000 words?

'I kept diaries over the years. Always have,' he says in the West Country burr that has never deserted him. 'So that helped. And then

I'd hear a name at our regular gatherings of railwaymen in Woking and the stories would come flooding back.

'I started in earnest when Joy and I began to spend a few winter months each year in Spain. I had time on my hands, so I wrote it all out in long-hand. It was twice the size it is now. Then as I typed it onto a computer I cut the bits where I waffled, or repeated myself. Sometimes we'd drive off to the west of England where I began and that would get the memory ticking over again.

'I'd spend hours in the evening in the study I made up for myself while Joy watched things that didn't interest me on the telly.'

Although Colin spent 47 years as a railwayman, his book covers only the first 14, from when, as a 15-year-old, he began at

'This work has not one word of fiction,' Colin declares



He has been keeping that eye trained for details for decades!

Crewkerne Station until April 1964 when he passed as an engine driver.

They were days of steam, and have always meant something very special to Colin. 'There was such pride in the skills and mysteries of the craft,' he says. 'When you stepped onto the footplate, you joined a very special and close family. And it was a way of life that didn't stop when you left the depot.'

LOST SKILLS

Some parts of Colin's book concern skills that are all but lost now, like the chapters headed 'The Enigma of Banking' and 'Box Full of Fire and the Boiler Injectors Will Not Function!' And advice that comes from another age such as, 'When calculating a load the "Equivalent to loaded goods wagons" table had to be consulted which shows that each wagon had a Marked Carrying Capacity, i.e. 13 tons and under was equal to 1, and at the top of the scale 50 tons and over was six, therefore it is feasible that a load of 7 wagons carrying 50 tons each would constitute a full load, conversely our 28xx was permitted to take 60 vehicles over the top, as an empty wagon counted as half. For Evershot bank the pannier had a loading of 3 which was equal to a load of 24 so it was on the cards that the load for both engines could be a maximum of 66.'

And what could be meant by his experience of 'a foreign 4-6-0 Standard Class "5"' where 'whoever had screwed her down had chosen the wrong wheel and in doing so had lowered the water scoop, along came the preparation set of men and were surprised to find the tender hand brake off, they found out why when the driver blew off the brake and opened the regulator, the effort to move was thwarted as the lip of the scoop lifted the track'?

But happily most of his book is written in

English – or at least in a dialect of the language!

UPS AND DOWNS OF A RAILWAY LIFE

Some of the personal tales Colin recalls illustrate the highs and lows of working in the industry at that time. He still cracks up as, arms waving, he describes how an overdose of water softener pellets caused a huge cloud of brown boiler steam to rise up at Lyng station. Cooling, it descending upon a bevvvy of ladies wearing 'much admired late-50s-style flared dresses'. 'The claims department were put on overtime!' he recalls.

On the other hand he still feels the awful tragedy of Durston porter Joe Brett who was crushed on the line in 1955. Colin still thinks of this awful day, and the mystery of how Joe was there. 'He never crossed the track,' Colin says. 'Never.'

Then there are stories of runaway trains, and the splendid incident of a bull on the loose on the station at Templecombe. 'You couldn't make anything like that up,' he says. In brief the bull needed to be fed and watered while it was in transit, and it escaped, frightening the life out of a couple in the booking office! The driver was 'off-site' at the time, savouring scrumpy in a local watering-hole!

'Good old days,' Colin smiles.

JUNIORITY!

Seniority seemed to follow Colin like a bad smell in his early career. At that time it governed every transfer and promotion in the industry – and it seemed to work against him at every turn. You can almost feel his depression as he writes, 'I was now 21 years of age had completed my fourth reallocation and again I was to be the junior hand.'

'It was the system,' he says. 'But at times, no, it didn't seem fair. Especially when I was the junior man. Again!'

'But I accepted it because the union supported it. In terms of 'belonging', the union was as important to me as the job.'

Colin encountered an early view of 'not belonging' when, as a young man freshly back from his National Service, he was faced with the aftermath of the union's 1955 strike about the working day. He went with 'Jack R, a most amicable driver' into the Westbury relief shed. When he had read his Daily Mirror, he handed it over to his driver.

He found himself faced with 'a giant' asking if he knew who he was giving his paper to. 'My driver, who else?' Colin replied in surprise. He was told, 'You, son, called that man 'driver' – when every man in this cabin knows him as a blackleg.'

Colin recalls, 'Had I tried to eat a sandwich it would have been impossible to swallow it.'

PASSED DRIVER!

The final words of Colin's book are those of a freshly passed man, with his clearance from Plymouth that enabled him to report for duty



Colin has never lived far from a railway line!



WC/BB Class 34067 Tangmere running through Sherborne on a Cathedrals Express

as an engine driver at Fratton mixed traction depot.

'But there are a host of other tales I could tell,' he smiles. 'Like the time in the 80s when I'd driven up to Waterloo and I told my guard I was just going to get a bit of shut-eye in the cab instead of having a cuppa.'

'I came to and looked at my watch and I was ten minutes late. I jumped out of the cab and there was an eerie silence. There was no one on the platform. The place was deserted.'

'I started to walk towards the barrier and a briefcase left on the train caught my eye. So I picked it up and carried it. Suddenly there was whistles and shouts and I see four or five military types in hi-vis uniforms with guns standing in front of me!

'It was a bomb scare. And I was innocently strolling along with the suspect package in my arms!'

He pauses, and chuckles. 'What times they were! I suppose I could write another book!' he says.

Colin sells his book 'You Can't Take The Steam Out Of Me' to rail staff for the reduced price of £10 (plus £2 for postage and packing). If you would like one, please contact him by phone (on 01329 286 797) by email at robcoljoy@talktalk.net or by writing to him at 34 Chamberlain Grove, Fareham PO14 1HH



Colin shunting the yard at Crewkerne



Templecombe – the scene of Colin's escaped bull story!



Fireman Colin Robins holding the water column of a Yeovil engine at Pen Mill



New driver Colin with Joy, Lorraine and David on the eve of their departure for Fratton

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN or journal@aslef.org.uk

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The 500 Club is open to individuals, branches and district councils.

If you would like to join the club please contact Lee James at Head Office at ljames@aslef.org.uk or on 020 7324 2400.

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CONTACT

Wendy Hurst, Secretary of ASLEF's women's committee
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STEVE PILMER DIED FAR TOO YOUNG

IT IS with deep sadness that I write of the very sudden passing of our brother and colleague Steve Pilmer on 20 November. Steve was only 50 years old and had developed a brain tumour. Steve was married to his beloved Linda and they had 3 sons that they were very proud of.

Steve started his railway career at Crofton in West Yorkshire. He then went to Neville Hill Depot in Leeds as a

depot driver before coming to Leeds as a Mainline driver with Northern Rail. Steve was very popular within the depot and would without question or hesitation support ASLEF when needed. He would be the first to help anyone he could and was keen to try to introduce an additional safety device to assist all drivers. Sadly this wasn't to be, but I know that he spent many hours and his own money

trying to make the railway a safer place for us all.

Steve was a Leeds United fan and just prior to his illness was in the process of designing a branch tie that would incorporate Leeds colours. We will make sure that this will still happen.

Steve will be missed by all his friends and colleagues but he will never be forgotten. Our thoughts are with Linda and the boys and all Steve's family.

Pauline Cawood,
Secretary, Leeds branch



WILLIAM (BILL) JONES A LONG LIFE ON THE RAILS

IT IS with great sadness that I have to report the death of Bill Jones on 21 February. He was 93. He had been ill with cancer in Frenchay Hospital Bristol.

Bill had a long and distinguished career on the railway which began in 1934 at the old Midland Depot, Barrow Road in Bristol. Towards the end of the 1950s as Barrow Road was being run down under the Western Region of BR, Bill was transferred to St Phillips Marsh. In

1963 Bill transferred to the then brand-new Bath Road Diesel Depot.

During Bill's time at Bath Road he led a very active role within ASLEF. He served on the LDC for many years, finally becoming Chairman.

Bill remained active during his retirement. He served on the committee of the BRSA and GWRs for many years. During this time he held many positions including Chairman and President.

During his retirement years, Bill was always interested in Bristol's local railway history, appearing in two short films. 'Railways of Bristol' and 'Steam Around Bristol' were released around 2000 and contain specialist contributions from Bill and other retired colleagues.

Our thoughts and sympathies go out to his family, Ian, Derek, Chris, Liz and Matthew, as well as to his many friends and colleagues. I am particularly grateful to Bill's long standing friend and former Sectional Council Member Les Penfold who provided most of the above information.

Bernard Kennedy,
Secretary, Bristol Branch



Hannah Dadds was the first woman to drive a London Tube

HANNAH DADDS FIRST FEMALE TUBE DRIVER ON LONDON UNDERGROUND

HANNAH DADDS, the first female Tube driver on London Underground, has died aged 70. Born in Forest Gate, she started on the railway in 1969 and became a District Line Tube driver in 1978. Her sister Edna also worked as a driver on the Underground.

Hannah left in 1993 and her achievements were marked by her being invited to one of the Queen's 'Women of Achievement' lunches.

ASLEF EC member Terry Wilkinson remembers the sisters and worked with Hannah in the early 1980s when he was a new guard. He says, 'I'll



never forget how helpful she was. Not only did she supply the tea, but she gave me a sincere welcome to the railway that was kind and sincere. She

left a real impression on me.

'Maybe it was because we had the common bond of being born in East London.'

DOUGLAS 'DOUG' BOXALL AN OLD COMRADE

ASHFORD branch is sad to announce the death of retired driver/foreman Doug Boxall on 31 October 2011 aged 87. Brighton-born Doug joined the railway as a cleaner/fireman in 1947, after serving as a gunner mechanic with Bomber Crew during WW2.

He moved to Tonbridge for his driver's appointment and spent many years there before returning to Ashford as loco foreman and later TCS until his retirement.

Doug was cremated wearing his green ASLEF tie. He will be sadly missed by all his old comrades.

Rob Kilkie, Reporter, Ashford branch

War dead remembered at Old Roan station

MERSEYTRAVEL, along with the local parish and schools of Liverpool's Old Roan district have, with support from Merseyrail, created a War Memorial Garden at



Local school children painted the pictures around the plaque

Old Roan's railway station. They have also erected a memorial plaque that lists the names of all the brave men and women from the railway who were tragically killed during the First and Second World Wars.

All around the remembrance plaque are pictures painted by children from local schools. It is an excellent mark of respect for all those who lost their lives so that we can enjoy the freedom we have today.

As an ASLEF officer, I was honoured to be asked to lay a wreath along with my colleagues from the RMT, Mark Dowd OBE (Chair of the Merseyside



Colin lays the ASLEF wreath at the new War Memorial Garden

Passenger Transport Executive), Neil Scales OBE (Director General, Merseytravel) and other dignitaries. It was apt that Mark Dowd's son - Sgt Major Alan Dowd - was at the event representing the Armed Forces.

It was a moment of special pride for me because my own father is remembered alongside all the others who lost their lives serving in the 1939 - 45 war.

Colin Smith, District 3 Organiser

May they forever be remembered, say Longsight

ON Tuesday 8 November a delegation of Longsight Branch activists attended ALSTOMS Manchester Traincare Facility - better known to the stalwarts as 'Longsight Depot' - for a rededication of the war memorial.

Longsight Depot opened in 1842 and during the two World Wars it saw numbers of its fraternity take part in the conflicts. Inevitably, some sadly never returned. During some recent works at the site, ALSTOM moved the war memorial and consulted a number of bodies, including the trade unions, to ensure it received the respect it deserves.

The memorial was originally dedicated on 13 November 1921 and has been present at Longsight ever since. For many years it was part of the drivers Signing-on Point and it always served as a poignant reminder to us all.

The deputy Mayor of Manchester, Elaine Boyes, came along to the re-dedication, resplendent in all the 'civic bling' that adorns these people. We were honoured also to be in the presence of the British Legion who assisted at the event. Being



The re-dedicated plaque dates from 1983

in their company is always most humbling

The formal part was conducted by our Railway Chaplain, Richard Cook, whose 'dog-collar' is a familiar sight in the North West, where he is very well respected. We were also pleased to have with us retired ASLEF member Wally Manford. The name of Wally's father, who served in the Manchester Regiment, is adorned on the memorial. Anyone who has met Wally will know he always cuts a grand figure as driver, with his close-crop beard, drivers' cap and brew in hand - a gentleman.

At the small gathering afterwards we took the opportunity to thank ALSTOM for the thought and respect that had led to the rededication.

Our fraternity should never forget the lives that were lost by those who were part of the movement and were our comrades. May they forever be remembered.

Alan Moss, Longsight Branch

Feltham honours long service

I'M pleased to say that 30 members came along to the most recent meeting of the Feltham Electric Branch - which is almost a third of our membership.

We had a special guest - Bro. Graham Morris who is the organiser of our District One. Graham gave his customary report on a range of issues and was then invited to present branch chair Bro. Nick Meagher and Bro Peter Renno with their 10 year badges and Bro Alec Shaw (LDC at Staines depot) with his



Lined up at Feltham are (from left to right) Bro N. Meagher (branch chair) Bro B. Marshall (LDC), Bro A. Shaw (LDC) proudly wearing his badge, District Organiser Bro G Morris and our branch secretary Bro J. Ajjane

20-year badge. Congratulations to them all.

After the meeting we adjourned to the main bar for a pint and a buffet.

It was nice to see

new members meeting and chatting to Graham as he made his usual annual visit.

Jamal Ajjane, Secretary, Feltham Electric

PERTH BRANCH OPEN MEETING

Perth branch will be holding an open branch meeting for all members of ASLEF at 13:00 on Sunday 4 March at Perth City Sports & Social Club, 18 Leonard St, Perth, PH2 8ES, which is 5 minutes' walk from Perth Station. Speakers will include General Secretary Mick Whelan, Scottish District Organiser Kevin Lindsay, EC Member (Dist 2) Hugh Bradley, ASLEF Trustee and First Scotrail Company Council rep Ian Smith. Any members from outside District 2 who intend to come along, please contact Perth branch secretary Grant Murchie by phone or text on 07412 453 454 so we have some idea of numbers for the catering.



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 75-77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Thanks for move help

I WOULD just like to place on record my heartfelt thanks to Martin Barter, Dave Emmington and colleagues on the FCC company council, in addition to Rob Reddan, Adrian Hewitt and colleagues from the LDC at Bedford for their help and support in finalising my depot move from Bedford to Peterborough. Your efforts truly are appreciated.

Thanks also to Brian Cain and Paul Andrews on the Peterborough LLR, in addition to all of my newfound depot and route colleagues on the GN for making me so welcome!

The assistance and patience of everyone who has contributed to my move will be forever valued and never forgotten. This is a real example of how ASLEF membership, alongside good ASLEF reps can really prove good value for money. Standing together and helping each other is what we train drivers do. It is only through unity and mutual support in the face of adversity that we will continue to improve our conditions, pay, life balance and industry as a whole.

Deepest fraternal Thanks Once Again!
Karl Davis, Peterborough Branch

Thanks for help for Craig

I WOULD like to express my thanks for the generous donations made by ASLEF branches to ensure that my son Craig could go to compete for Great Britain at the Global Games held in Italy.

There were swimmers from over 20 countries and Craig took part in six events. He reached three finals, coming fifth in the 400m freestyle, third in the 200m butterfly and second in the 1500m freestyle and was the only British swimmer to win a medal. He is now training for the National Disability championships and the London regional championships later this year. He's increasing his training and gym work in preparation for qualifying for the Paralympic Games.

Many thanks to the branches who contributed to his costs – Arncliffe, East Ham, Gateshead and Newcastle, Bishops Cleeve, Hitchin, Horsham, Edinburgh No 2, York, Edinburgh, Nottingham, Seven Sisters, West Brompton, Northern Line

CALLOUS CLARKSON EXPOSED

I AM an ASLEF member at FGW Paddington (LTV) and I am writing to say how pleased I am that the union is making a formal complaint to the BBC about comments made by Jeremy Clarkson on the One Show on BBC One.

This complaint is not in connection with his initial rant about 'shooting striking public sector workers', but his later statement that suicides between Reading and London regularly delayed his rail travel and that train drivers should be authorised to proceed over bodies to avoid delays.

I am speaking as a driver who has colleagues working for both LTV and HSS who have had fatalities at the hotspots of Hayes, Southall and Ealing Broadway. I personally have had passengers screaming behind my cab at

Acton ML because a Network Railway MOM has not authorised the passage of trains before all body parts have been removed. I find Clarkson's remarks abhorrent and disrespectful to the victims of previous suicides on precisely this stretch of railway, both friends and relatives of the deceased and the railway staff who experienced the incidents.

I hope the union will not only formally complain to the BBC Trust about these remarks but also make ASLEF's view known to the general public. I understand that Unison is considering reporting Clarkson to the police regarding the 'shoot strikers' comments under 'conspiracy to incite violence' legislation.

Bernard Kasparas, Paddington branch

North General, St Pancras International, Hull, Bakerloo line, Banbury and Skipton. Doug Moate, Driver, Barking

Low hall, high standards

THROUGH the medium of the Journal I would like to say a few words about the RMS weekend forum at Scalby, Yorkshire from 11 November to 13 November. It was totally worth every minute spent there. The venue was superb, the organisation was great and the company was second to none.

To spend the weekend with a gang of true united trade union brothers and dedicated socialists whose purpose in life is to make our world a better place is not only a pleasure, but a privilege. I really look forward to being invited to attend next year.

The speeches and debates with our EC President, an LGBT representative, the TUC Regional Secretary for Yorkshire and Humber, Doncaster Central MP, Chief Whip for the Labour Party and EC member Tosh McDonald were not only interesting but also very informative.

The RMS Forum and the work of the RMS Committee is all funded in-house, so they have set up the 500 Club to help with finances. Please support this worthwhile section of your union by joining the 500 Club. There are members at the age of 93 marching the streets campaigning and electioneering on your behalf - so please get behind them and keep them going.

Spike Jones, Retired Member, Brighton

Is family friendly fair?

I AGREE that 'family friendly shifts' are a sensible idea, especially for those drivers who are mothers of young children.

I work for Freightliner Heavy Haul and whilst I enjoy the work I have to say, with some regret, that only about 8% of our turns give us a 'normal' night's sleep. Nearly every shift we do is unsociable.

If we had a group of young mums driving for us they would obviously claim those few 'friendly' day shifts - which would mean leaving us blokes with an even worse

quality of life than we have now.

It's easy to say that we must all make some sacrifice - but a driving mother with a medium-sized family could easily demand 15 years of family friendly shifts. If 20% of a depot's drivers were to be female, it could mean us poor blokes would never see a pleasant, normal day shift ever again.

Is that fair to the overwhelming majority of the driving workforce?

Arno Brooks, Chairman, Knottingley

SmartPEN pensions are criminal

AT A time of austerity, severe cuts in public services and the Con-Dem government's attacks on public service pensions, I believe it is criminal for companies to be urging workers to move over to SmartPEN schemes.

Introduced to entice reluctant employers to offer pensions to their employees, the scheme has been jumped on by large companies which already have secure pensions. Seeing the benefit that the National Insurance reduction gives the company, it is not surprising that they wish to guide their employees into the scheme. But one rather serious question remains.

Apart from the immorality of reducing public sector pensions while offering savings through National Insurance to large companies, does this change the protection that many of us in the railway industry enjoy?

If the government pulls the plug on this form of pension in the future, and by using the same argument they are employing against the public sector, will they have a say on our own pensions, as they would have been paid for by the tax payer?

To me the fact that they are taking money out of the Health Service is enough of an argument to opt out. I believe that anyone who doesn't may be treading a dangerous

friendly society secretary and the members of this society will have reason to thank God for it".

WATCH THE LEFTIES

A comment piece in the Journal warned

"Many times in the ranks of Labour there is a goodly percentage of men who are

totally inexperienced persons, and who revel - in their blessed state of irresponsibility - in the use of militant or revolutionary methods which are disastrous in themselves and bring only ruin to all connected with them".

○ Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett

KEITH IS NOW OFFICIALLY JOLLY



ON behalf of 'The Jolly Boys' (aka Swansea's Retired Drivers) I would like to send our best wishes to our retired general secretary, and fellow Swansea branch member, Keith Norman.

We recall the time when Keith paid the branch a visit, and was presented with a 'Jolly Boy' shirt.

Now as an official 'Jolly Boy' he can wear the shirt on the day we meet, the first Wednesday of every month, whilst sipping his favourite tipple under the Spanish sun. We'll do the same back home in Wales and raise a glass to you and your wife Chris.

On behalf of all of us, we wish Keith and Chris a happy and healthy retirement - and our thanks for all his hard work, and friendship.

John Rossiter, Jolly Boy, Swansea

path for the future well-being of the pension fund.

Ian Neeve, Secretary, Chiltern Company Council

Exeter thanks for backing

On behalf of the Exeter branch and Bro Ryan Howe, I would like to thank our District Council and the individual FGW branches that sent us resolutions of support. Ryan was dismissed by FGW for gross misconduct but was fully reinstated on appeal. There is no doubt that if Ryan had not been a member of ASLEF he would now be unemployed. In unity there is strength.

I would also like to thank District Organiser Stan Moran for his unstinting efforts in defending Ryan and achieving a fantastic result for ASLEF.

I don't think FGW was expecting such a professional and robust defence, coupled

with a completely solid display of unity by all our members.

Giles Bowerman, Secretary, Exeter branch

Glad I stayed in ASLEF!

When I had to stop driving trains about seven years ago for medical reasons, I decided to stay in ASLEF. It's proved to be one of the better decisions that I have made.

I am currently working as a Revenue Protection Assistant (RPA) and as my wages are protected, I have always suspected that management would like to get rid of me if they could.

A few months ago I was accused of verbal assault and threatening behaviour towards an RPA from a different TOC and was suspended from work. The outcome was that I was called to a disciplinary hearing for gross misconduct.

I thought that I was well prepared for the hearing but Tosh McDonald, who came into the meeting with me, picked up on things that

WORKERS CONTROL IN NORWICH

A report from the Norwich Branch read in part

"Brother Thirtle, a delegate before the Royal Commission, argued that the workers had control of everything in their hands if they only knew how to use it in a judicious manner. They could control the Labour market, the Stock Exchange, the Money Market, and inasmuch as they, as working men, were in a majority, they could, if they were united, control the world".

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The January 1912 ASLEF Locomotive Journal included a report from D.F.S on the new law providing compulsory health insurance for workers earning less than £160 per year, there was a warning about extremists in the Labour Party - and the revolution began in Norwich! ...

INSURANCE BILL WELCOMED

"The National Insurance Bill is now an Act of Parliament and comes into operation on 15th July 1912.

"It is the largest measure of social reform that has ever been adopted, and when it comes into operation in the summer many a

I hadn't even considered. He demonstrated that my company had neither shown me proper duty of care nor given me the training I needed. He exposed flaws in the investigation and a severe lack of evidence against me. Needless to say, no disciplinary action was taken against me.

I would also like to thank Martin Exley who was my point of contact with ASLEF until Tosh took over.

To all you medically restricted ex-drivers out there, I would strongly suggest that you think twice about leaving ASLEF, even though you are no longer driving.

Ricky Elkins, ex-driver, Scarborough

Sharp ends

I write to inform former colleagues and friends that after 37 years in a career that spanned Kings Cross Depot (1974/78) Wimbledon Depot (1978/85) and Newcastle Central (1985/2010).

I have had to retire on ill health grounds as a result of a stroke. My health is improving and I now look forward to my retirement with my family.

If any former colleague wishes to get in touch with me for a catch up could you please contact the secretary of the

Gateshead and Newcastle branch who will pass any messages on?

Davy Sharp, Retired Member, Gateshead & Newcastle

East of England Labour well worthwhile

On behalf of Mark Daniels (Barking Mainline) Les Bennett (Bishop Stortford) Floyd Doyle (Cambridge) and myself, I'd like to thank ASLEF for funding two extra positions and thus giving us the opportunity to attend the East of England Labour party conference at Peterborough in November.

While Harriet Harman and Ed Balls conceded that Labour ended up raising debt from 2008 they argued that this was needed to keep the economy afloat. Current government borrowing is £46 billion over budget and unemployment is its highest for 17 years.

Ken Livingstone spoke mainly about a lack of investment in transport and social housing while local MEP Richard Howitt MEP said 60% of European funding is 'in limbo' as the government has scrapped the department that deals with it – so the money could go back to Brussels.

Mark Daniels detailed how vertical

integration will fragment the infrastructure and a motion was carried calling for public ownership of our industry.

Mark Reynolds, Lincoln Branch

Potts tops

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the continued support, perseverance and dedication shown by both ASLEF/Grand Central Sunderland branch Chairman Garry Lonsdale and a very special branch Secretary - Paul Potts.

'Potts's' commitment and determination as a rep was super. I am proud to be ASLEF and from my perspective subscription fees certainly get you a lot more than a diary. I have certainly had my money's worth!

Tom McLaughlan, Bradford Driver, Grand Central



CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please phone 020 7324 2400 or send email to journal@aslef.org.uk

THORNABY MOTIVE POWER DEPOT REUNION After 50 years the depot now demolished. I would like to inform and invite all members to the first depot reunion to be held in Jack Hatfield Bowling Club Middlesbrough on 14th December 2011 from 13 00hr onwards. For more info call Jim Smith; Tel 01642 823819 Email smith215@sky.com

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FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



ONE CARDIFF BRANCH BADGE, which are individually numbered priced at £3 each, One ASLEF tie pin, priced at £2 each. One ASLEF tie clip/slide priced at £3 each. The price of P&P is £2 per order up to 5 items. My contact details are, Edwin Cox, 2 Skenfrith Mews, Celtic Horizons, Newport, NP10 8HF, 07811761656.

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CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner.

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NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on 07788 153954, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton, Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.



THE LONDON MIDLAND DISPUTE ...

From the picket line to the university

LAST month general secretary Mick Whelan was invited to the University of Westminster to speak about the events and implications of last December's London Midland Dispute. Also on the panel were London Midland's Operational Director, Wallace Weatherall and its Train Crew Manager Andy Coulthurst, along with industrial disputes facilitator Peter Firth.

The talk centred on the dispute on the harmonisation of terms and conditions. 'It was interesting to discuss our aims and those of the company in sober academic surrounds,' Mick says. 'It was very different from the highly-charged days of the actual dispute.'

The basic problem stemmed from the fact that because franchises had merged, drivers doing exactly the same job were being paid at radically different rates of pay.

The union naturally wanted harmonisation to the highest level of terms and conditions while London Midland sought a package at the lowest possible cost. The company was keen to negotiate productivity incentives to finance the package.

The talks became even more complicated because it became involved in a legal dispute. Because a very small number of ballot papers were inadvertently issued to non-union members, in December 2010 the High Court declared the action illegal. The union argued that if the 'minor infringements' injunction was not overturned it would create a precedent that could make all strikes unlawful and the legal ruling was overturned last March 2011.

THE COLLEGE VIEW

It is interesting to see how the academics reacted to the discussion and the lessons they drew from it. Here are the main points they drew from the explanation of how the dispute

was resolved:

- There were problems relating to the lack of training in negotiation for managers, especially compared with the training and experience of the trade union side.
- Both sides see that employees (as 'stakeholders') need the company to prosper and grow so that jobs are protected. But at the same time, both employees and managers have conflicting aims in relation to terms and conditions of employment and control of change. Both sides share a common desire not to have strikes or other industrial action: one because it is their job to prevent it and the other because union members don't choose to lose pay unnecessarily.
- All negotiators need to carefully assess the realities of power. This means they have to work out what sanctions the other side has at its disposal, and would be prepared to use. Train drivers are one of the few groups of UK workers to maintain a strong power base. This is because companies are dependent on their staff being able to get to work or they will lose business. It is especially important for commuters in the South East. Some quarter of a million workers commute into London, and

increase caused by an expanding population and dramatic rises in the price of accommodation in the capital.

● There needs to be an understanding of how the 'other side' views any particular cause of a dispute. Without this it is difficult for management, for example, to be able to frame any offer to the unions in terms they will appreciate.

● Sometimes a negotiating team can have as many problems controlling and managing their own side as they do talking to the other side.

● In broad terms it is important especially for management to recognise that it is much easier to increase wages than it is to reduce them.

● It is important for line managers to be highly involved in negotiations.

● For a negotiation to be a success requires patience, imagination and goodwill from both teams of negotiators. In this dispute no less than 19 versions of the agreement were drafted.

● It is difficult to overestimate the importance of careful preparation.

● It is both interesting and important to understand the importance of the 'negotiating ritual'. In many disputes the employer is unable to concede at the beginning of the negotiations what they can eventually concede at the end.

● Negotiations don't need to be 'personal' and it is a hindrance to progress if they are. While people don't need to be friends, they can remain on good, professional terms outside the talks.

● It is important that at the end of the dispute both the company and the union are satisfied with the outcome.

'Returning to think about the dispute a year after the dust had settled was a thoughtful and interesting exercise,' Mick says. 'I'm grateful to the university for putting on the event.'

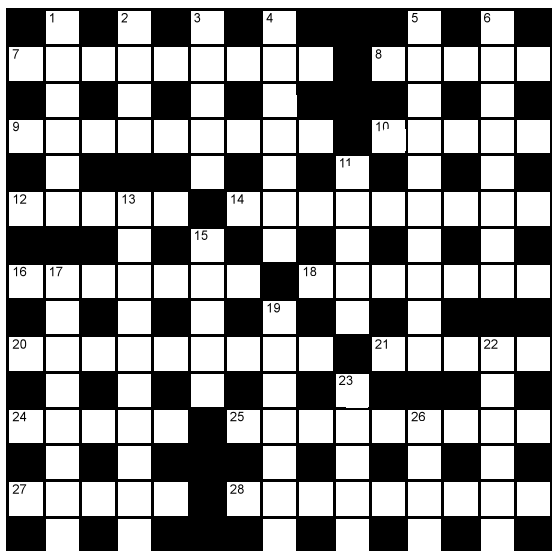
'If we don't consider, and learn from, our experiences we become stagnant. Life is about learning, both from our successes and our mistakes.'

Dr Christine Porter said, 'Both the students, who are studying for Master's degrees, and their academic staff gained from this experience and we were pleased to host the event.'

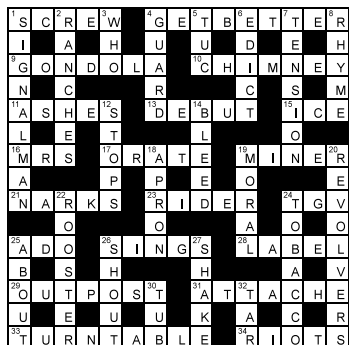


At the University of Westminster lecture were London Midland's Operations Director Wallace Weatherill, Andy Coulthurst (LM), ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan and Peter Firth

Prize Crossword No. 69 set by Zebedee



Solution to Crossword No 68 which appeared in the December 2011 edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **D. L. Haller** from **Swindon, Wilts**

**Across**

- 7** Singer-songwriter best known for his partnership with Art Garfunkel (4,5)
8 Cliff Richards birthplace (5)
9 and **14** Football team nicknamed "The Owls" (9)
10 H.G. author of "The War of the Worlds" (5)
12 Bonnie and ____ (5)
14 See 9 (9)
16 See 17 down (7)
18 Examination also called a postmortem (7)
20 A four-legged animal (9)
21 David ____ (5)
24 African country - capital Porto Novo (5)
25 Administrative HQ of Buckinghamshire (9)
27 Musical group of eight (5)

- 28** Scottish town over which A Pan Am 747 exploded in 1988 (9)

Down

- 1** Andy ____ - US pop-culture artist (6)
2 First letter of the Hebrew alphabet (4)
3 Skeleton part (5)
4 Ian ____, former Ryder Cup golfer noted for his colourful trousers (7)
5 2005 movie with Cameron Diaz and Toni Collette (2,3,5)
6 See 15 (8)
11 and **19** - Comic actor/presenter of Have I Got News For You (5)
13 Actor who wrote The Moon's a Balloon (5,5)

- 15** Goddess Williams with a bat (5)
17 and **16** across - English actor knighted in 1947 and made a peer in 1970 (8)
19 See 11 (7)
22 Get insect to eavesdrop (6)
23 1980s TV drama set in a Japanese POW camp in WWII (5)
26 Saxophonist Charlie Parker's nickname (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Name.....
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Thanks for all your responses to the 68th ASLEF crossword in the December edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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